



Public Library Legislation

Introduction

Public library service in Alberta

In Alberta, public library service is a local service with a focus on local community needs. Under the authority of the *Libraries Act*, a municipality may choose to provide public library service at the local level by establishing a library board and at the regional level by joining a library system.

Alberta public libraries have a strong history of local autonomy. A public library board, upon its creation, is a governing board and a corporation with full management and control of public library service delivery.

The *Libraries Act* and Libraries Regulation

The *Libraries Act* and Libraries Regulation govern public library service in Alberta.

The *Libraries Act* sets the legal framework for public library service through the establishment of library boards, which manage public library service on behalf of the municipality. The Libraries Regulation sets out sound management practices for library boards. By providing a framework for library boards to work within, the act and regulation are considered enabling legislation. They tell library boards the broad rules they need to follow, but not necessarily how they should go about it.

The *Libraries Act* and Regulation sit alongside other provincial legislation such as the *Municipal Government Act*. All provincial legislation works in harmony and one act does not supersede another. While public library service is considered a local service, library boards do not fall under the provisions of the *Municipal Government Act*.

Public library funding is not governed by the *Libraries Act* or Libraries Regulation. Municipal funding for public library services is decided at the local level, with municipal councils responsible for determining the amount of financial support provided. Provincial funding falls under the parameters of the Municipal Affairs Grants Regulation and the accompanying Public Library Grant Program Guidelines.

Public Library Stakeholder Engagements to Date

In fall 2019, the Public Library Services Branch within Municipal Affairs began a series of in-person engagements with Alberta public library stakeholders to identify areas under provincial library legislation perceived as being regulatory burdens. All public library board members and library staff were invited to participate. Those in attendance were taken through a review of the existing legislation and then given the opportunity to provide feedback through facilitated group discussions and anonymous workbooks.

Eleven in-person engagement sessions were held across the province from September 2019 to January 2020 in the communities of Slave Lake, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Okotoks, Wainwright, Lac La Biche, Brooks, Drumheller, Red Deer, Stony Plain, and Edmonton. For those unable to attend the in-person sessions, an online survey was available from September 25 to December 13, 2019. The online survey received 68 responses and 92 stakeholders attended the in-person sessions, for a total of 160 participants.

The completion of this work was paused due to the challenges and competing priorities of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On June 23, 2021, the Honourable Ric McIver, Minister of Municipal Affairs, invited key library stakeholders to a virtual meeting to confirm a proposed engagement plan on identifying further opportunities for red tape reduction in the *Libraries Act*. It was agreed that fall 2021 was a good time for the entire library community to provide feedback. Virtual engagement sessions on four broad topics are scheduled for September, and a survey is available to collect written feedback.